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COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

United States Senate

June 24, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

I wish to bring to your attention the concerns of Mohave County, Arizona, regarding efforts by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to update the Black Mountain Burro Herd Management Plan.

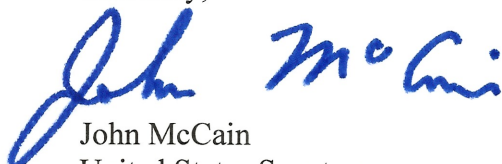
As you know, Mohave County is home to the largest Herd Management Area (HMA) in Arizona, totaling approximately 1.1 million acres. The HMA was established in 1996 under BLM's Black Mountain Ecosystem Plan at a time when HMA totaled just 478 head. However, reproduction rates have outpaced BLM's ability to manage the herd. Today, the herd population in Mohave County has exploded to over 1,500 head while only 120 wild horses and burros are adopted each year on average.

The Interior Department's mismanagement of the program has resulted in significant unintended consequences for Mohave County. For example, burros have devastated the areas' natural resources by over-grazing the land, which has subsequently harmed native wildlife like quail, rabbits, and doves. Furthermore, burros have migrated into residential neighborhoods in search of food, posing a significant public safety hazard to the community. In just over two years' time, the burros have been responsible for 24 car accidents in Bullhead City, Arizona (see attached).

Against this backdrop, I ask you to (1) indicate if you are aware of the public safety and natural resources concerns raised by Mohave County in connection with the Department's mismanagement of burro herd populations in Mohave County; (2) outline a plan of action and associated milestones by which the Department intends to return burro population numbers to levels that can be more reasonably managed; and (3) identify what additional legislative authorities, if any, you need to address this problem.

I strongly believe that any update to the Black Mountain HMA must address public safety and natural resources concerns. The response you provide will be most appreciated, and I look forward to your timely reply.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator

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